

VLR-8/28/95 NRHP-10/12/95

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 18A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Riverside

other names/site number VDHR File No. 95-11

2. Location

street & number 1315 Old Winchester Pike not for publication N/A
city or town Front Royal vicinity N/A
state Virginia code VA county Warren code 187 zip code 22651

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this x nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property x meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant statewide x locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

James J. Smith
Signature of certifying official/Title

8/25/95
Date

Virginia Department of Historic Resources
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting or other official _____ Date _____

State or Federal agency and bureau _____

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register _____
See continuation sheet.
determined eligible for the _____
National Register
See continuation sheet.
determined not eligible for the _____
National Register
removed from the National Register _____
other (explain): _____

Signature or Keeper _____ Date _____
of Action

=====

5. Classification

=====

Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)

☒ private
☐ public-local
☐ public-State
☐ public-Federal

Category of Property (Check only one box)

☒ building(s)
☐ district
☐ site
☐ structure
☐ object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 2	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1 buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> 0	<input type="checkbox"/> 0 sites
<input type="checkbox"/> 0	<input type="checkbox"/> 0 structures
<input type="checkbox"/> 0	<input type="checkbox"/> 0 objects
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 2	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1 Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0Name of related multiple property listing (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.) N/A

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6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: **DOMESTIC** Sub: **Single dwelling**
Secondary structure

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: **DOMESTIC** Sub: **Single dwelling**
Secondary Structure

=====

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

☒ **MID-19TH-CENTURY: Greek Revival**
☐ **LATE VICTORIAN: Italianate**
☐ **LATE 19TH & EARLY 20TH C.: Colonial Revival**

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation **STONE**
walls **BRICK**
roof **ASPHALT**
other

Narrative Description (Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria (Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- ☐ A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- ☐ B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☒ C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☐ D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations (Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

- ☐ A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- ☐ B removed from its original location.
- ☐ C a birthplace or a grave.
- ☐ D a cemetery.
- ☐ E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- ☐ F a commemorative property.
- ☐ G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Period of Significance 1850-1921

Significant Dates 1850

1921

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

unknown

Narrative Statement of Significance (Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS)

- ☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- ☐ previously listed in the National Register
- ☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
- ☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary Location of Additional Data

- ☒ State Historic Preservation Office
- ☐ Other State agency
- ☐ Federal agency
- ☐ Local government
- ☐ University
- ☐ Other

Name of repository: _____

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Riverside
Warren County, Virginia

SECTION 7:

SUMMARY DESCRIPTION

Located along the north bank of the South Fork of the Shenandoah River in the community of Riverton, now a part of the town of Front Royal. Riverside is a large, two-and-one-half-story, mid-nineteenth-century brick dwelling that was enlarged during the early twentieth century, and exhibits design elements from the Greek Revival, Italianate, and Colonial Revival styles. The house has a side-passage, double-pile plan with matching single-pile wings to the north and south. The brick walls are laid in five-course American bond on a coursed ashlar limestone foundation. Riverside originally had a flat roof, that was replaced with the current hipped one in the early twentieth century. At the same time, hip-roofed dormers were added in the attic story and blind gable-roofed dormers were added around the existing chimneys. The interior of Riverside retains most of its original, largely unpainted, Greek Revival-inspired woodwork. The two outbuildings on the property include an early-twentieth-century garage, and a noncontributing brick cottage constructed in the early 1930s. Although located in the community of Riverton, Riverside has the ambiance of a secluded rural setting. Its surroundings are extremely pristine and well-preserved and contain mature trees and bushes. The house has undergone few alterations in the past fifty years, and preserves a high degree of architectural integrity. It also demonstrates an interesting instance of an early-twentieth-century remodeling of a mid-nineteenth-century house.

ARCHITECTURAL ANALYSIS

Riverside is located along the north bank of the South Fork of the Shenandoah River, just west of its confluence with the North Fork. The property originally encompassed a large tract of farmland. Presently, the house sits on two and one half acres that do not include the open farmland and agricultural outbuildings historically associated with the property. The primary facade of Riverside faces east and fronts onto the Old Winchester Pike, once the main road from Front Royal to Winchester. The bridge across the Shenandoah River along this road was replaced by modern bridges to the west in 1941. Riverside sits on top of a slight hill with the front yard sloping down from it. A stone wall and gateposts were added to the front of the property in the early 1920s (Photo 1). The paved driveway circles the back of the house and passes the two outbuildings located on the property.

Riverside is a large, seven-bay, T-shaped, brick structure covered by a series of hipped and pyramidal roofs with three tall interior-end brick chimneys with corbeled caps (Photo 2). A ca. 1890 photograph indicates the house originally had a flat roof without any dormers (Photo 3). The wide overhanging eaves, plain wooden entablature, and scroll brackets completely

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surround the house and also appear in the historic photograph. When Riverside was constructed in 1850, it was architecturally transitional in character between the Greek Revival and Italianate styles. Its eclectic character was further increased in the early 1900s when the current Colonial Revival-inspired roof line and dormers were added by James R. Richards, Jr., owner of the house at the time.¹

Riverside's brick walls are laid in a five-course American-bond pattern and were probably fired on the property. All walls have v-struck mortar joints and bear traces of white lines applied over the mortar. Several signatures and dates of nineteenth-century visitors to the property are found in the mortar on either side of the front door. The house rests on a foundation constructed of coursed ashlar native limestone and has six-light basement windows fronted by horizontal wooden bars and topped by brick jack arches. The exterior basement entry is found on the west side of the house.

Riverside is T-shaped with a protruding central three-bay block flanked by two-bay two-story wings. The front block measures thirty feet wide and protrudes forward nineteen feet from the rest of the house. A one-bay, hip-roofed, Greek Revival-style portico with paired square Doric columns, a plain wooden entablature, balusters, and handrail rests on a coursed stone foundation and emphasizes the asymmetrical front entry. The front paneled door has a single-light transom and a brass plaque of unknown age that reads, "J. R. Richards 1849."² The side two-story brick wings extend to the north and south and measure nineteen feet long and twenty feet deep. The double-hung windows on Riverside have six-over-six sashes and are topped by brick jack arches. All the windows retain their operating wooden louvered shutters. These same details appear in the ca. 1890 photograph of the house (Photo 3).

One-story brick additions off of the side wings were added in 1921 by Julian N. Major, the father of the present owner, Jean M. Wilson (Photo 2). These include a two-bay kitchen wing to the north, and a one-bay, open-arched porch to the south. According to Mrs. Wilson, the bricks for these wings came from an old icehouse, carriage house, and summer kitchen that were demolished at that time. Both wings have shallow-pitched hipped roofs, are of brick construction on stone foundations, and share the same eave detail of a plain wooden cornice and entablature. The open brick arches of the south porch are echoed in the north kitchen wing as a detail in the brick suggesting that the kitchen was originally an open porch that was later closed in. The kitchen wing measures twenty feet square, compared to the south porch wing that measures eighteen by sixteen feet. The kitchen wing also has six-over-six-sash double-hung windows, an interior end brick flue, and a back door. The south porch rests on stone piers, has plain handrails and balusters between the arches, and a wooden floor. A door leading out onto this porch from the south wing of the house has a pedimented door surround.

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The west elevation of Riverside is five bays wide and asymmetrical in arrangement. All the openings are on one plane, except for the two 1920s wings that are slightly recessed (Photo 4). A door, that lines up with the front door on the east elevation, is located on the second bay in from the south and is fronted by a one-bay, hip-roofed portico with square Doric supports. The limestone and slate steps and platform and the wrought-iron rails are modern alterations. A pattern for a gable-roofed porch is evident on the walls of this elevation, indicating the earlier porch was much larger and different from the current one. Old photographs of the house show that the smokehouse and summer kitchen were located just off of the porch. The basement entry is found on this elevation and features a batten door and exterior stairs with modern wrought-iron railing. The roof line on this elevation is a modified gable with a central hip-roofed dormer with triple six-over-one-sash windows.

Riverside's roof line is quite complex because of its numerous dormers. The front pyramidal- and hip-roofed elevation has three hip-roofed dormers, one on the protruding block and one each on the side wings. The largest of these dormers is centered in the main block and features triple six-over-one-sash windows. The dormers on the wings have one six-over-one-sash window. The north and south elevations of the house feature gable-roofed pedimented blind dormers that surround the existing chimneys. The brick of the chimney is evident where the window would normally be (Photos 4 and 5). A hip-roofed dormer with paired six-over-one-sash windows is also found in the south elevation of the main block. The paired six-over-six-sash windows on the first and second stories of this section have wooden lintels with fluted trim in between and were early-twentieth-century additions to the house (Photo 5). According to the present owner, the original slate shingles of the roof were replaced by asphalt shingle in the 1960s.

The interior of Riverside is much less eclectic than its exterior. All the woodwork is similar in that it is largely unpainted, of walnut, cherry, maple, and pine wood, and is of the Greek Revival style in origin. Some of the pine has been grain-painted to resemble walnut. The walls and ceilings are plaster and lath, while plain crown and base molding and paneled doors with box locks are found in almost all the rooms. The side passage, two parlors, and the upstairs bedrooms still retain their early-twentieth-century wallpaper, which is in excellent condition. The random-width pine flooring throughout the house is original. Some of the window and door reveals have plain raised panels of walnut. The use of rich wood like walnut and cherry for the trim is a striking feature of Riverside's interior.

The first floor of the central block of Riverside has a standard side-passage, double-pile plan. The side passage is divided into a front and rear hall. The front hall is much larger than the rear one and contains the staircase (Photo 6). The double-run, open-string, open-spandrel staircase has an elegant cherry handrail, simple tapered balusters, and a plain turned newel. The stringers are modestly decorated by a curvilinear panel with a tooth-like projection. A

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rectangular single-pane window between the front and rear halls is found on the landing mid-way up to the second floor. An early-twentieth-century brass goose-neck lamp hangs from the center of the plaster ceiling medallion found near the front door.

The rear hall is very small and contains four doors; one to the outside (west side) of the house, one to the front hall, one to the library, and one to the rear parlor. To the north of the side passage are double parlors separated by paneled double doors (Photo 7). The two rooms are identical in size but differ greatly in trim. The front parlor is much more formal and has a fireplace with a simple Greek Revival-style walnut mantel (Photo 8). The woodwork in this parlor is composed of a variety of hardwoods and includes wide ramped pediments of walnut supported by flat-capped pine boards grain-painted to resemble walnut. The pedimented trim pattern is used around all the doors and windows of this room. In addition, walnut paneling is found beneath the two front windows. The walnut door leading to the side passage is also Greek Revival in nature and is made up of three horizontal raised panels over two vertical flat panels.

The doors between the two parlors open into the rear parlor, which is much less formal than the front parlor (Photo 7). The double doors are composed of four horizontal raised panels over two vertical flat panels. The trim in this room is unpainted walnut and is composed of flat four-inch boards with plain corner blocks (Photos 7 and 8). In addition, there is no fireplace or mantel in this parlor.

The single-pile wings off of the central block are accessible through the rear parlor (for the north wing), and through the rear hall (for the south wing). These wings are highly unusual in that they each contain a room on the first floor with its own boxed corner stair leading to a second-story bedroom that was originally inaccessible to the rest of the second floor. According to tradition from past owners, Mr. and Mrs. Spengler, who constructed the house, were not on good terms and therefore did not want access between their bedrooms. The south bedroom was apparently Mr. Spengler's room and the north one, Mrs. Spengler's. These upstairs bedrooms were only accessible through the boxed staircases from the first-floor rooms. Doors were cut into the bedrooms at the turn of the century to connect them with the rest of the upstairs.

The first-floor room in the south wing was originally the dining room but is now used as a library. The trim is of cherry and pine wood, with much of the pine grain-painted. The south wall contains a mantel, an exterior door, and the boxed staircase (Photo 9). The cherry mantel has square columns on plinths, a simple raised-paneled frieze, and a plain mantelshelf. It is a vernacular interpretation of the Greek Revival style. To its left is a five-paneled door, identical to the one in the front parlor. Additional wooden paneling above that, according to the owner, was originally a china cupboard. This door now leads out to the south brick porch wing that was added in 1921. To the right is a split boxed winder staircase with four stairs in the room

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leading up to a door. Beyond the door is the rest of the staircase leading up to the second-floor bedroom. The five-paneled door features three raised horizontal panels over two vertical raised panels. The panels are of cherry and contrast with the darker walnut stiles and rails. Beneath the stair another paneled door leads to a small closet.

The first-floor room of the north wing, now the dining room, is very similar to the study in plan and decoration. It features a central Greek Revival-style mantel with rectangular Doric pilasters supporting a plain frieze and mantelshelf (Photo 10). A door leading to the 1920s kitchen wing is to the right of the mantel and the staircase leading to the upstairs bedroom is to the left. The trim is identical to that in the rear parlor and study. The unique feature in this room is found in the small closet beneath the staircase, where there is a trap door in the floor leading to a small space beneath the dining room (Photo 11). According to written records, this hidden room was used during the Civil War to store silver and other valuables. One account tells of a Confederate soldier hiding there for a week.³ The door and the hardware appear to have been there for many years, and the opening is just large enough to accommodate a human. The space beneath the floor is small and shallow, and is inaccessible to the rest of the basement.

The kitchen wing beyond the dining room was constructed in 1921 using bricks from the smokehouse, icehouse, carriage house and summer kitchen, that were torn down at that time. The kitchen wing features a work area, an eating area, and a full bathroom.

The second floor of the main block of Riverside is similar in plan to the first floor, but has more rooms. A small room now used as an office is located at the front of the side passage, and a nursery at the rear. The nursery has a narrow door (twenty-five inches wide) along its southern wall that leads into the bedroom above the study. This doorway was cut through in the late nineteenth century to allow for access. The bedroom over the study was supposedly that of Mr. Spengler. The room has a built-in paneled closet to the left of the fireplace, and the staircase leading from downstairs is to the right (Photo 12). The mantelpiece is similar to those found in the rest of the house, as is the flat trim with plain cornerboards. The walls are covered with early-twentieth-century wallpaper.

There is a large bedroom over the front parlor covered in floral wallpaper with a plain Greek Revival-style mantel of walnut (Photo 13). A bathroom, small hall, and closets are located over the rear parlor. The bathroom dates to the turn-of-the-century and features an old clawfoot tub and wide wainscot. The hall leads to a bedroom in the north wing that is almost identical to the one in the south wing. As in the other wing, a narrow doorway was cut through the wall to gain access.

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The attic of Riverside is accessible by a single-run stair along the south wall of the second-story hall. This staircase was a later addition to the main stair, and is characterized by the use of a Victorian-era newel post and balusters. The attic is composed of one large room with open framing and plank flooring (Photo 14). It is well-lit by natural light from the many dormers in the roof. According to the present owner, who grew up at Riverside, the attic was used as a large playroom where the children would roller skate, play basketball, and swing from a trapeze.⁴ The old basketball hoop (a bushel basket with a missing bottom) and the trapeze still hang from the rafters (Photo 14). A maid's room is located over the southern wing and has natural light from one dormer. Narrow beaded tongue-and-groove paneling covers all the walls and the room's vaulted ceiling.

A full basement under Riverside is accessible from an exterior staircase off of the north wing along the west side of the house. It contains four rooms accessible through open doorways with wooden lintels above (Photo 15). The floors are of brick and one room has a built-in potato bin. There is no evidence to suggest there was ever a cooking fireplace in the basement, which is now used to house the furnace.

The outbuildings at Riverside include an early-twentieth-century garage and an early-1930s brick maid quarters (Photo 16). The frame garage is clad in German-lap siding and has a hipped roof of standing-seam metal. It rests on a low formed-concrete foundation and has side sliding batten garage doors and six-over-six-sash windows. Centered along the south elevation are two paneled doors that lead into a storage room to the right, and a potting shed to the left. They are sheltered by a one-bay, shed-roofed porch with a standing-seam metal roof. To the rear is an attached chicken coop, outhouse and shed, all of which are in poor condition. The brick building referred to as the maid quarters was constructed in the early 1930s and made to resemble the original summer kitchen. It is considered noncontributing as it postdates the property's period of significance.

Although at one time the Riverside property encompassed a much larger tract of land, the farm has since been split. The house now sits on a two-and-one-half-acre tract of land and does not include the surviving late-nineteenth-century agricultural outbuildings historically associated with the property. Only the current acreage associated with the house is included in the boundaries for this nomination.

ENDNOTES

1. Interview by Maral S. Kalbian with Mrs. John A. Wilson on June 9, 1995. Mrs. Wilson's sister remembers their grandfather put the new roof on shortly after their grandmother died in 1901.

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2. It is unknown when this plaque was added. The house was not completed, nor did J. R. Richards own the property, in 1849.
3. Richards, Capt. James Russell. Transcript of lecture delivered before Officers' Lyceum at Walla Walla, Washington. 25 April, 1895, p.7.
4. Interview by Maral S. Kalbian with Mrs. John A. Wilson, March 23, 1994.

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SECTION 8:

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Riverside is the oldest dwelling in Riverton, a small community now located in the town of Front Royal. Sited on a hill along the north bank of the South Fork of the Shenandoah River, Riverside was constructed in 1850 by Samuel S. Spengler, using architectural elements from the Greek Revival and Italianate styles. It was remodeled during the early twentieth century using components of the Colonial Revival style. Riverside now represents a highly unaltered example of a large, two-and-one-half-story, brick dwelling that exhibits design elements of the Greek Revival, Italianate, and Colonial Revival styles. In addition, the floor plan is somewhat unusual in that the second-story bedrooms located in the north and south wings were originally inaccessible to the rest of the second floor. Riverside retains much of its architectural integrity and features beautiful unfinished hardwood interior trim inspired by the Greek Revival style. The agricultural outbuildings once associated with the property date to the turn of the century and have passed out of the ownership of the current owner of Riverside. The contributing outbuilding on the property is an early-twentieth-century garage. Although located in the community of Riverton, Riverside's integrity is further enhanced by its pristine country setting. Located across the Shenandoah River from Front Royal, the county seat, Riverside was also a crucial site during the Battle of Front Royal in 1862. The architectural form and interest of Riverside render the property locally significant under Criterion C of the National Register. The property exhibits integrity of association, design, feeling, location, material, workmanship, and setting.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Prominently located at the junction of the north and south forks of the Shenandoah River, Riverton was one of the first communities formed in Warren County. A ferry run by Thomas Chester operated there as early as 1736. Originally named Confluence, Riverton was also an important commercial center, as a location where goods were loaded onto flat-bottom boats for shipment to eastern markets. Historical and architectural evidence suggest that Riverton had very few buildings prior to the Civil War. Land records indicate that Samuel Spengler owned 220 acres of farmland in the area before he constructed Riverside on part of it in 1850.

The first bridges across the river were wooden and were constructed by the Front Royal and Winchester Turnpike Company in 1854 and 1855.¹ They were located along the Front Royal-Winchester Turnpike that ran in front of Riverside. A small segment of the original alignment of that turnpike still survives in front of the property and is today called the Old Winchester

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Pike. The arrival of the Manassas Gap Railroad in 1854 further enhanced Riverton's role as a major shipping center.

The Civil War had a disastrous effect on Riverton as the wooden bridges over the river were destroyed in 1862, after the Battle of Front Royal.² The area around Riverside was included in the Battle of Front Royal, and Stonewall Jackson is believed to have slept on the front porch of the house on the night after the battle.³

In spite of the destruction that occurred, Riverton quickly rebounded, this time as an industrial center. In 1870 an Irishman named Samuel Carson purchased a large tract of land in Riverton and established the Carson Lime Company.⁴ He also constructed a large dwelling for himself as well as housing for his employees and a large church for the community. Other industries came to Riverton as well, including the Riverton Mills Company that was chartered in the 1890s. At the same time, Riverton was growing as a summer destination point for visitors from Washington who arrived there by train. The town had at least two hotels in operation by the turn of the century.

In 1894 cast-iron bridges were constructed on the site of the old wooden bridges. At the dedication ceremony on May 1, 1894, Riverton was described as:

At the confluence, and on both sides of both branches of the river, Riverton, a town of 700 people, has sprung into existence, buoyant, strong and progressive. Here the South Branch is spanned by a bridge of the Richmond and Danville Railroad, and the mainstream by a bridge of the Shenandoah Valley Railroad.⁵

Although the Riverton Corporation (successor to the Carson Lime Company) is still in existence today, Riverton has lost most of its industrial and tourist-destination appeal. The construction of modern bridges west of Riverton in 1941 diverted traffic and related activities away from the center of town. The old roadbed of the Front Royal-Winchester Turnpike is now simply an access road within Riverton.

Riverside has thus seen the evolution of Riverton from a small commerce center to a bustling industrial and tourist town, and finally to a fairly quiet primarily residential area. Riverside is the oldest dwelling in Riverton and was at one time the center of a large farm.

Riverside is located on part of a 3,600-acre land grant made to William Russell by the governor and Council of Virginia in 1735. The land was then divided and passed through several hands including the Chester, Kendrick, and Shambaugh families.⁶ Beginning in 1826, 220 acres of that land was inherited by Samuel M. Spengler. Although Riverside is located on a small hill

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above the banks of the Shenandoah River, the house has never been flooded. In addition, Riverside's farm and gardens have always been famous for their very fertile, loamy soil. Oral tradition maintains that Spengler began construction of the house in 1837, and completed it ten years later. The land tax records show no added value for buildings for the years prior to 1850. The 1850 entry shows a \$2,000 value for buildings, and the remarks state that the value was added for new buildings.

Also according to tradition, the Spenglers were not a very congenial couple and therefore had separate bedrooms in the two wings of the house. These bedrooms were only accessible through private staircases from the first floor, and were not accessible to the rest of the second floor until doors were cut through by later owners. No written evidence was found to support or deny this theory. Architecturally, this arrangement is somewhat unusual, and may in fact reflect the nature of the Spengler's relationship.

In 1854, the house and 220 acres passed to the ownership of Maj. James R. Richards, who supposedly won it in a hand of poker.⁷ Maj. Richards was the deputy sheriff of Warren County and died in 1895. His son James R. Richards, Jr., was a graduate of West Point and a career army officer who served with the 4th Cavalry against the Apaches. He retired from service in 1896 and lived at Riverside.⁸ It is believed that he was responsible for the remodeling of Riverside in the early 1900s.

The Battle of Front Royal took place on May 23, 1862. The battle was a victory for Major General T. J. Jackson, whose troops ultimately forced Union divisions at Strasburg to retreat, and allowed Jackson to position himself directly behind the Union army in Winchester. This in turn contributed greatly to Jackson's defeat of Maj. Gen. Nathaniel P. Banks's army at the First Battle of Winchester two days later.⁹ Riverton was not an established community at the time of the Civil War, and Riverside was the only house in the area. Riverside's location between the river bridges directly along the Front Royal-Winchester Turnpike, and its proximity to the railroad also contributed to its vulnerability. Luckily the house was not destroyed, but was instead used as a hospital, hiding area, and resting spot.

Letitia Blakemore was the mother-in-law of Maj. James R. Richards and came to live at Riverside in the late 1850s. She kept a detailed diary from 1859-1865 that is now in the possession of Riverside's current owner, Mrs. John A. Wilson. The diary is a rich and invaluable record of daily life before, during, and after the Civil War. It is also particularly important in that it documents the conditions at Riverside during the Civil War. The May 23, 1862, entry reads:

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A pleasant day. Tighter reins were drawn over the people in town this morning. No one was allowed to go in or come out. They felt oppressed and knew not how it would end. Thanks be to an overruling Providence, about 3'o'clock our hearts were made to leap with the sight of Jackson's Army coming in to our rescue. We were almost frantic with joy. As soon as the Yankees saw them they scampered. I never saw such running in all my life. We were all so excited we screamed with joy, but soon were compelled to go to the basement, the firing commenced and the balls whistled over the house.¹⁰

The May 24, 1862, entry describes activities at the house and verifies that Jackson spent the night at Riverside.

Last night the soldiers were coming in town til 12 o'clock and such shouting and cheering I never heard before. I did not close my eyes with sleep the whole night. Our men have been bringing in prisoners all day. They have a great many. Mr. Richards has five wounded men at house and a house full of well ones. Gen'l Jackson, Col. Ashby, several others officers and several relatives with Bet's boys spent last night.¹¹

General Sheridan also stayed at Riverside in October of 1864. Letitia's diary describes his visit:

October 11: Last night Genl Sheridan and aids came to supper and lodge. He has been very kind and promised Bet everything she asked, cows and bacon and Rush's release.

October 16: Genls Sheridan and Torbert with their staff and other officers came in last night, had their supper taken in the dining room and all sat in the parlor. Sheridan and staff lodged in the rooms, Torbert had 3 tents.¹²

Letitia Blakemore's diary also provides a view of the daily routines of every day life at Riverside during this period. According to the May 22, 1860, entry the wind tore off the roof and left the house exposed to rain. The roof was finally replaced in September, but not after several large leaks. At one point Letitia fears that the plaster would fall off because of all the moisture. Her diary also tells of a man from Charlestown who came and took the old roof that was laying in the front yard and used it to make cartridge boxes.¹³

The diary paints a picture of Riverside as a busy place during this period. The house was on the main road and many people stopped there, much to Letitia's chagrin. Letitia writes in November 27, 1861:

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Just after sunset, up drove a carriage with a lady, gentleman, 4 children and nurse and carriage driver. Bet had to set the servants to work to cook another supper, make fires and prepare beds. Mr. Stump also came with 4 servants but he pays. Tis a great imposition for people to come in at all hours, just as if Mr. Richards kept a hotel.¹⁴

Another valuable resource that describes life at Riverside during this period comes from the transcript of a lecture given by James R. Richards, Jr., in 1895 to the Officer's Lyceum at Walla Walla, Washington. The subject of the talk was his personal memories of the Civil War. Although only a child in the 1860s (born in 1854), his recollections of the war are extremely insightful and add further to the wealth of written records about Riverside during this period. At one point the presence of the trap door in the floor of the closet in the dining room (then a bedroom) of Riverside is explained.

To secure our family silver and such other valuables as might be attractions to marauding parties, a hole had been cut through the floor of a linen closet in my mother's bedroom and a trap door arranged-- over this trap door a clothes basket was set completely concealing it-- nails were driven in the rafters and the aforesaid valuables, ranging from a silver soup-bowl to a last-year's ham, were hung upon them. No ray of light penetrated there except through a very small ventilator and even that was covered with ivy. My cousin was put, for safe keeping, into this place and remained there for nearly three weeks.¹⁵

After James R. Richards, Jr.'s death in 1914, Riverside passed to his only child, Jean Elizabeth Richards, who married Julian Neville Major. Julian Major was a successful businessman and organized the Old Virginia Packing Company in Front Royal. The Majors lived at Riverside with their five children, and added the kitchen and porch wings in 1921. The present owner, Mrs. John A. Wilson, is one of the Major's five children, and thus the great-granddaughter of Maj. James R. Richards.

Mrs. Wilson grew up at Riverside and recalls that very few alterations have been made to the house since she was a small child. The architectural evidence supports this and reveals a strong sense of pride of ownership. Riverside is in remarkably unaltered condition yet it is in a high state of repair.

Riverside's period of significance begins at the completion of the house in 1850 and continues until 1921, when the one-story brick wings were added. Not only is Riverside a unique mid-nineteenth-century architectural resource in the area, it is also an important landmark relating to the evolution of Riverton. The eclectic combination of Greek Revival, Italianate, and

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Colonial Revival elements, as well as the use of beautiful unfinished hardwood trim on the interior enhances its architectural relevance. Its role during the Civil War, particularly in light of the wealth of documentation through personal memoirs, further increases the property's significance.

ENDNOTES

1. Poe, Rebecca. "Riverton: Hub in Shenandoah Valley History", Front Royal-Warren Sentinel. September 5, 1985. pp.1-2.

2. Poe, Rebecca. "Riverton: Hub in Shenandoah Valley History", Front Royal-Warren Sentinel. September 5, 1985. pp.1-2.

3. National Park Service. Study of Civil War Sites in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia. Washington, D.C.:U.S. Department of the Interior, 1992. page 57. Hale, Laura Virginia. Four Valiant Years in The Lower Shenandoah Valley, 1861-1865. Front Royal, VA: Hathaway Publishing, 1968. p.151. According to tradition, Jackson refused the luxury of a bed and opted to sleep on the porch so as to share in the discomfort of his soldiers that were sleeping in tents in the yard. Also, Jackson is said to have written a note to Belle Boyd thanking her for her service to her country on that day. The table he used is still in the possession of the family and is called the "Jackson table".

4. Poe, Rebecca. "Riverton: Hub in Shenandoah Valley History", Front Royal-Warren Sentinel. September 5, 1985. p.1.

5. Poe, Rebecca. "Riverton: Hub in Shenandoah Valley History", Front Royal-Warren Sentinel. September 5, 1985. p.1.

6. Good, Rebecca H. Proofs of Title to Riverside. Front Royal, VA. November, 1994.

7. Interview by Maral S. Kalbian with Mrs. John A. Wilson at her home, Riverside, in Warren County, VA, on March 23, 1994.

8. Blakemore, Maurice Neville. The Blakemore Family and Allied Lines. Dietz Press, 1963. p. 188.

9. National Park Service. Study of Civil War Sites in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia. Washington, D.C.:U.S. Department of the Interior, 1992. page 55.

10. Blakemore, Letitia. Personal diary from 1859-1865. Unpublished. In possession of Mrs. John A. Wilson. Riverton, VA., May 23, 1862 entry.

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11. Blakemore, Letitia. Personal diary from 1859-1865. Unpublished. In possession of Mrs. John A. Wilson. Riverton, VA., May 24, 1862 entry.

12. Blakemore, Letitia. Personal diary from 1859-1865. Unpublished. In possession of Mrs. John A. Wilson. Riverton, VA. October 11-16th, 1864 entries.

13. Blakemore, Letitia. Personal diary from 1859-1865. Unpublished. In possession of Mrs. John A. Wilson. Riverton, VA. Entries from May 22, 1860, September 17-20, 1860, and July 16, 1861. She also indicates that the new roof will cost Mr. Richards more than \$300.00.

14. Blakemore, Letitia. Personal diary from 1859-1865. Unpublished. In possession of Mrs. John A. Wilson. Riverton, VA. November 27, 1961 entry.

15. Richards, Capt. James Russell. Transcript of lecture delivered before Officers' Lyceum at Walla Walla, Washington. 25 April, 1895, pp.7-8.

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SECTION 9: MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

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Interview by Maral S. Kalbian with Mrs. John A. Wilson at her home, Riverside, in Warren County, VA, on March 23, 1994.

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Richards, Capt. James Russell. Transcript of lecture delivered before Officers' Lyceum at Walla Walla, Washington. 25 April, 1895.

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Riverside File at Warren Heritage Society Archives. Belle Boyd Cottage; Front Royal, Virginia.

Warren County Deed, Will, and Land Tax Books, 1836-1995. Warren County Clerks Office, Front Royal, Virginia.

Warren County Land Tax Records, 1836-1850. Microfilm from Virginia State Library Archives in Richmond.

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SECTION 10: GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION:

The boundaries for Riverside are described in the Warren County tax maps as 20-A-12-8-14.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION:

The boundaries for Riverside are drawn to include the house and two surviving outbuildings historically associated with the house. The agricultural outbuildings and remaining farmland once associated with the property have passed out of the ownership of the current owner of Riverside.

Riverside

Riverside
University, VA
UIM Reference:
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